

March 17, 2020

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins
New York State Senate
188 State Street LOB - Room 907
Albany, NY 12227

Speaker Carl Heastie
New York State Assembly
New York State Capitol Room 349
Albany, NY 12227

Dear Governor, Senate Majority Leader, and Speaker:

As a group of civil rights and faith leaders committed to justice, fairness, and the humanity of every person, we write to you in full support of the current bail law that passed the State Legislature last April. We have long seen the harms mass incarceration—particularly inhumane jail conditions, unfair policing and prosecutorial practices—have caused our communities. We will not stand for any measure that would dismiss the needs of our communities to satisfy the desires of those who are invested in dividing and criminalizing our communities.

The old bail system threatened our safety and severely undermined our civil rights and liberties. Under the old bail law, tens of thousands of people were in jail due to the size of their bank account, denied the presumption of innocence, and were often pressured to plead guilty to try to go home. This drove our mass incarceration crisis and caused stark racial disparities.

We are encouraged by your commitment to justice but urge you to remain committed to the new bail law so that New York can fulfill the promise of true justice that has been denied to too many people. Therefore, we simply ask that you reject any proposal that might widen racial disparities or further increase jail populations. Our fundamental concern with any plan to roll back the new bail law to give judges more power to detain legally innocent people based on so-called predictions on who may be “dangerous” is that it is inherently discriminatory.

While the fight toward dismantling mass incarceration and respecting the humanity of all people is a long one, it is important for us all to remember that we cannot afford to go backward. If we want true safety, we must stop criminalizing poverty and invest more in providing access to supportive and affordable housing, mental health services, health care, jobs, and education.

Respectfully,

Syracuse Chapter, National Action Network

Central New York Chapter, New York Civil Liberties Union

Utica/Oneida County Chapter, NAACP
Syracuse/Onondaga Chapter, NAACP
Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse
Central New York Solidarity
Citizen Action of New York (Central New York)
Genesee Valley Chapter, New York Civil Liberties Union
United Christian Leadership Ministry (Rochester)
Baber AME Church (Rochester)
Glory House International (Rochester)
New Beginnings Church (Rochester)
Temple Emanuel-El (Rochester)
Buffalo/Niagara Chapter, National Action Network
Western Regional Office, New York Civil Liberties Union
Faith Leaders for Criminal Justice Reform (Long Island)
Nassau County Chapter, New York Civil Liberties Union
Nassau County Chapter, National Action Network
Faith Leaders for Criminal Justice Reform (Nassau County)
Second Baptist Church of Baldwin (Nassau County)
Rockland Coalition to End Jim Crow
Hudson Valley Chapter, New York Civil Liberties Union
End the New Jim Crow Action Network (Poughkeepsie)
Islip Town Branch, NAACP (Long Island)
Suffolk County Chapter, New York Civil Liberties Union
Our Lady of The Miraculous Medal Church Roundtable for the Common Good (Wyandanch, NY)
Capital District Chapter, New York Civil Liberties Union